

## Message Text

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ACTION COME-00

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EB-08 EUR-12 /031 W

-----000604 290538Z /16

R 281115Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6573

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 MANAMA 1933

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, BA

SUBJECT: EXPORT MARKET FOR AMERICAN FURNITURE INDUSTRY

REF: STATE 201414

1. MANAMA AGREES WITH COMMENTS FROM OTHER POSTS IN THIS REGION THAT THERE APPEARS TO BE EXCELLENT POTENTIAL FOR AMERICAN FURNITURE IN THIS REGION BUT THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE BEST APPROACH FOR MARKET PENETRATION. RESIDENTIAL AND OFFICE FURNITURE IMPORTS INTO BAHRAIN FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS ARE: 1975-\$7.8 MILLION; 1976-\$16.8 MILLION; AND 1977-\$23 MILLION. THE PRESENT U.S. SHARE OF THIS MARKET IS NIL. MAJOR SUPPLIERS ARE THE U.K. AND SCANDANAVIA, GERMANY AND FRANCE. SOME BOTTOM-OF-THE-LINE ITEMS IN WOOD AND PLASTIC ARE IMPORTED FROM TAIWAN, PHILIPPINES AND OTHER ASIA. WE EXPECT TO SEE CONTINUED GROWTH IN THESE IMPORT FIGURES THROUGH 1978 AND THE FIRST HALF OF 1979. WHILE GROWTH IN IMPORTS OF RESIDENTIAL FURNITURE WOULD CONTINUE THEREAFTER, THE GROWTH FIGURES MIGHT DROP AS THE HOTEL/OFFICE BUILDING BOOM IS NOW PEAKING AND FURNISHING THESE BUILDINGS WILL BE UNCLASSIFIED

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COMPLETED NEXT YEAR.

2. AS NOTED BY OTHER POSTS AND THE AMERICAN FURNITURE INDUSTRY MIGHT HAVE TO INDUCE SOME CHANGE IN TASTE TO ENTER THIS MARKET. SHOWROOMS AND HOMES IN BAHRAIN ARE FILLED WITH WHAT TO AMERICAN TASTES ARE GROSSLY OVERSTUFFED AND ORNATE FURNITURE. THE CHANGE MAY NOT BE TOO DIFFICULT TO INDUCE

AS ONE HEARS INCREASING COMPLAINTS FROM STYLE LEADERS OVER WHAT IS AVAILABLE LOCALLY AND EXPRESSIONS OF PLEASURE WITH FURNITURE SEEN IN TRAVELS, MOVIES AND MAGAZINES. THE CLEANER "SCANDANAVIAN" TYPE FURNITURE ON THE LOCAL MARKET IS USUALLY THE VERY EXPENSIVE LINES WHICH SEEM TO MOVE REASONABLY FAST. BAHRAINIS ARE GRADUALLY ADOPTING THESE STYLES IN BUSINESS FURNISHINGS.

3. EMBASSY DISCUSSIONS WITH A FEW OF THE LARGEST FURNITURE IMPORTERS REVEAL THAT VIRTUALLY NOTHING IS KNOWN OF THE AMERICAN FURNITURE INDUSTRY. EUROPEAN, AND PARTICULARLY UK, FURNITURE IS WELL KNOWN THROUGH LONG ESTABLISHED TRADE LINKS AND SEMI-ANNUAL VISITS FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF PARENT FIRMS. ALSO THE LARGER BAHRAINI IMPORTERS REGULARLY VISIT EUROPEAN FURNITURE SHOWS AND EXHIBITIONS.

4. AN EXAMPLE OF THE POTENTIAL IS A VISIT JUST MADE BY THE LARGEST BAHRAINI IMPORTER/RETAILER TO THE UNITED STATES WHERE HE PLACED WHAT HE TERMED A VERY LARGE ORDER. HE SAID THAT HE WAS VERY SURPRISED AT THE QUALITY, SELECTION, COLORS AND FABRICS AVAILABLE IN AMERICAN AND HE VISITED ONLY DALLAS. THIS MAN'S SURPRISE COMES IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT SEVERAL AMERICAN SUPPLIERS OF INSTITUTIONAL FURNITURE HAVE VISITED HIM WITH COMPLETE COLOR CATALOGS DURING THE PAST YEAR.

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5. THE ABOVE DEMONSTRATES THE DIFFICULTY IN ENTERING THIS MARKET. THE LIMITED NUMBER OF RETAILERS, LIMITED PAST DELIVERY DUE TO PORT CONGESTION AND VERY STRONG DEMAND HAS MEANT LITTLE SALES EFFORT AND LESS CONCERN WITH CONSUMER INTERESTS ON THE PART OF RETAILERS. TO GET THEM TO CHANGE FROM KNOWN LINES AND PROMOTE NEW ITEMS, THE RETAILERS WILL HAVE TO SEE AND TOUCH THE NEW PRODUCTS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT A TRADE MISSION, CATALOG SHOW OR REGIONAL ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN WILL BE EFFECTIVE. A TRAVELLING DISPLAY WOULD BE EFFECTIVE BUT PROHIBITIVELY EXPENSIVE.

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6. WE WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST A SPECIAL ONE-TIME PROMOTION OF REGIONAL GROUP BUYER'S TRAVEL TO A MAJOR U.S. FURNITURE SHOW. WE COULD ATTEMPT TO ARRANGE WITH AN AIRLINE OR TRAVEL AGENCY FOR REDUCED-FARE TRANSPORTATION FROM ONE CENTRAL DEPARTURE POINT IN THIS REGION. WE COULD ASK THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS TO ARRANGE SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS, RECEPTIONS AND FACTORY VISITS IN CONJUNCTION WITH AN EXHIBITION OR CONVENTION. WE BELIEVE THAT FOUR TO TEN DIRECT, PERSONAL INVITATIONS TO MAJOR IMPORTERS IN BAHRAIN WOULD BE FRUITFUL. WE COULD PRESENT THESE INVITATIONS BUT THE RESPONSE WOULD BE GREATER IF PRESENTED IN PERSON BY AN INDUSTRY REP FROM AMERICA. IF OTHER POSTS BELIEVE THEY COULD USEFULLY IDENTIFY SIMILAR INDIVIDUALS WE MIGHT GATHER A SIGNIFICANT GROUP OF BUYERS AT MINIMUM COST TO THEM AND TO THE AMERICAN FURNITURE INDUSTRY.  
POWERS

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